

OPINION

Death in Dublin

THE murder of the British Ambassador in Dublin is but the latest episode in the long, bitter and bloody tragedy which is Irish history. It is hard indeed to see any end to it, but it is right that we should never get used to it.

The horror and the anger that most of us feel, however impotently, is at least testimony to the fact that the moral sense has not been blunted, and that we do not accept murder and terror as a normal part of life. Yet we do live in an age of terror, an age, that is, in which terrorism is often employed as a method of advancing a political cause. And the brutal fact is that terror often works. It was I.R.A. terror which in the end destroyed Stormont in Northern Ireland.

Since then British Ministers and officials have often had talks with the I.R.A., thus conferring on psychopaths a sort of spurious legitimacy.

It is now up to the Cosgrave Government to crack down, and hard, on the I.R.A. in the Republic. True, Mr. Cosgrave's heart is in the right place; he has clean hands and formidable difficulties. Irish courts, to put it mildly, have not always been of much use in dealing with the gunmen and bombers. Nevertheless, the death of an envoy is a big black mark on the good name of any country in which it happens.

Although we are most conscious of Irish terrorism, if only because it takes place on our own doorstep, it is a world-wide phenomenon. In Africa, the Middle East, and South America, these things seem to happen every day. It is a problem crying out for a solution, for the protection of innocent life is the first obligation of government to the governed. Unhappily, it is impossible to see any bloodless way out.

Terrorism thrives on hope. The only way to destroy the hope is never to give in to them, never to negotiate with them, never to allow terrorists to succeed in their objective.

Kids on the dole

EVERYBODY must feel sympathy for the school leavers who cannot find work. To go from the class room to the dole queue must be a uniquely depressing, and in many cases damaging, experience. Despite the overriding need to control and cut public expenditure, anything that can be done to help ought to get general support.

But is the new scheme announced by the Government yesterday going to do much to help? There will be 20 pilot schemes affecting about 6,000 young people. For 12 weeks at colleges of further education and skill centres they will have a chance to develop their skills—how far?—and assess their careers. Now most of these unemployed young people have no skills and no qualifications. They are at the bottom end of the labour market and likely to remain so.

It would be more imaginative, and a good investment of public money, to give them all a real chance to acquire an industrial skill. This would take time and it would cost more. But it would not be a waste.

Whatever the problem—Dr Sykes has a word for it

FOR a man whose word is often literally law, Dr. John Sykes seemed remarkably free from the pressures of power. He was, in a word, grunted (*colloq.*) pleased, satisfied and well he might be. For today's publication of the revised Concise Oxford Dictionary means that after five years' labour he has seen the satisfactory birth of a new edition to a distinguished family.

There is the great daddy of them all, the Oxford English Dictionary, 12 volumes and a four-volume supplement, currently being worked on. There's the misleadingly, if correctly, entitled Shorter, which High Court judges consult when discussing definitions in points of law.

There's the Pocket, and the charmingly named baby of the family, the Little Oxford Dictionary, as well as the School and the recent Children's Illustrated Dictionary.

But it is the Concise which helps crossword fanatics settle pub bets, confounds secretaries—or their bosses—is consulted by journalists, relied upon by the compiler of the Express Target word game, and sells 300,000 copies a year to a world market anxious to improve its understanding, spelling and pronunciation of English.

The new edition—the sixth—is the most comprehensive overhaul in the work's 65-year-old history.

Science

Dr. Sykes, 47, bespectacled, with that mild manner and dry humour one sees in many an academic supremely confident in his field, looks like the editor of distinguished dictionaries should. Actually his background is in science. He took his doctorate at Oxford in mathematics and worked as a research physicist and translator of Russian and German technical papers at Harwell for 15 years before joining the O.E.D. full time in 1971.

But he certainly talks like a man who cares about words. Showing me into his small room at the top of an Oxford redbrick place packed with books, printers' proofs and boxes of indexed cards listing new words or meanings encountered by him and his largely volunteer army of researchers, he explained the building's crowded atmosphere.

This used to be a dwelling

house," he said, thus removing any doubts I may have had that he was referring to an alchouse, almshouse, bakehouse, boarding house, coffee house, light-house, public house, summer house, work house, House of God or indeed house of ill fame.

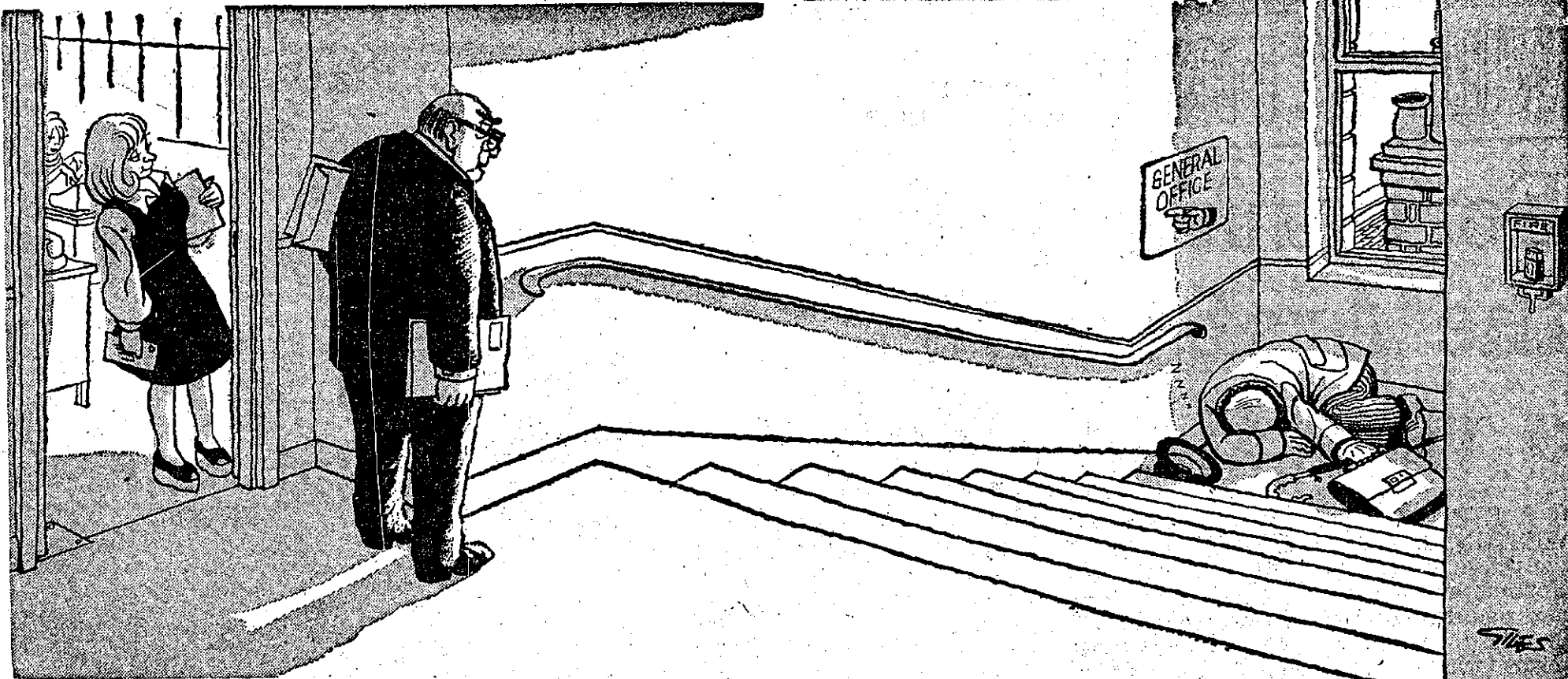
There are 14 sub-sections and dozens more definitions of the word "house" in the dictionary.

"It would be difficult to say how many words we define, because there are so many sub-divisions among the definitions," says Dr. Sykes. "I prefer to use the term 'vocabulary items'."

His earnest desire for clear communication removes any suggestion of po-faced (*colloq.*) solemn-faced, humourless) pedantry. He informs me there are about 74,000 vocabulary items in the new edition against 68,000 in the previous edition.

There are, of course, more than 6,000 new items because we have dropped a large number of words which have passed so far out of general usage that they don't even justify inclusion as archaic words," says Dr. Sykes. The final arbiter on whether any word gets the chop (*sl.*) be killed, be dismissed.

But far from being a



"It's time, Mr. Barnard, that some of us realised we are past staying up half the night indulging in B.B.C. marathon Olympics."

America has shown me what a mess we're in

I HAVE never before returned to this country from the United States feeling that as far as the quality of life was concerned we had much to learn.

American violence, the furious divisions within its society, the appalling decay of its city centres, its hectic pace and strident noise, the size of its racial problem, its yearning to do good in the world and its frequent consequential doing of harm, and then, more recently, the long torment of Vietnam and the shame of Watergate: all these added up to a place exciting to be in but a rather to leave.

Yesterday I returned to London from Washington and New York, to a United Kingdom nowhere near to pulling itself out of its economic crisis; to a Parliament fractious and uncertain; to a Government seeking to cut public expenditure in the face of a split Cabinet and divided Labour movement; and to a country bewildered and discontented.

and to the news that the British Ambassador to Eire has been killed by a terrorist landmine—reminding us that no American domestic problem is as violent and intractable as ours in Ireland.

Our society has degenerated since I was last in the States; and there has much improved. The cities are still dirtier than ours; but the service is no longer as surly as it was.

The Bicentennial celebrations helped a great deal. Vietnam is over; Watergate's scars are healing, fast.

Frivolous

Even if police cars, ambulances and fire engines still crash through the streets with sirens shrieking like a chorus of banshees, the country is quieter, its divisions less raw, its youth far less angry.

There is a seriousness about the conduct of politics in the United States, compared to which the behaviour of our politicians is frivolous. This may, in part, be a reflection of the magnitude of American power and the decline of British. But it is more than this.

British politics centres around the Parliamentary play; apart from General

THE GEORGE GALE COLUMN



Elections, politics is about what goes on inside the Cabinet, between the Cabinet and the T.U.C. and inside the debating chamber of the Palace of Westminster.

Much of what the public sees and hears are charades and fake duels. The American political process is more complex, more continuous, far more concerned with real interests and deals than with rigmarole. It is treated professionally; there is no nonsense about

amateur status: it is seen as maturing. The result is that the general level of political discourse is much higher there than here.

Serious

If at times the seriousness with which politics is treated becomes humourless and pompous, then this may be a price worth paying if the alternative is the cynical bitchiness of the badinage which passes

for most of the political discourse in this country. Politics is, or should be, a serious business and not a succession of parliamentary performances; and it is a business in which far more people should become engaged.

We should open up the Civil Service. We should reduce the number of M.P.s and pay them much more money. We need an elected senate.

to represent the nation and the regions and the major interests in the country.

Although an elected President would not work here—the vested political interest against this would be too strong—I cannot see why the registered individual paid-up members of the Labour Party and of the Tory Party should not choose from among a number of candidates their leaders in regular primary elections. They could insist.

Monument

But could such changes come about? Are we still so bemused that we consider we have the best political system in the world, and the best Civil Service, and the best politicians?

If you wish to see their monument, look around you: their monument is our mess. Coming back home from the States, I have never felt more acutely that mess.

.. AND THE REMARKABLE MAN FIGHTING TO SAVE US ALL

Why the world must heed this megaton admiral and his lethal men of war



Rickover: Still on active duty

IN 1900 a Russian Jew emigrated with his family to the United States. He settled in Chicago, taking up his trade as a tailor.

In due course Abraham and Rachel's son Hyman, Russian-born but American-educated, managed to get himself into the naval academy at Annapolis.

Now, although 76 years old, he is still an admiral on active duty; he needs to have his commission extended every two years to keep him from compulsory retirement.

And he's still fighting. He wants 10 Trident submarines built. One is already under construction. Another is ordered.

Each of these terrifying men of war is armed with 24 missile tubes, each 30 feet high and each containing eight hydrogen bombs.

One Trident sub equals 192 H-bombs—and it is said in Washington that the third most powerful man in the world, after the President of the United States and the

General Secretary of the Russian Communist Party, is the commander of one of these vessels.

This slight, white-haired Russian Jew has fought, and largely beaten, the American military and political establishment, reforming the American Navy almost against its will.

He has a disciple, likely to become even more powerful. Hero

Years ago a young naval officer applied to join Rickover's project. He was asked searching questions, one of which was: "Did you do your best at Annapolis?"

The young officer replied, after thought: "Not my best."

"Why not the best?" Rickover replied.

The young officer was Jimmy Carter, probably the next President of the United States. Carter tells the anecdote. Carter also makes clear his devotion to his hero and mentor, Admiral Rickover.

We would be well advised to heed the Admiral: he is no blood-and-guts American war chief, but a quiet intellectual with a great streak of determination.

He does not want bombs for their own sake: "We are now living on the accumulated moral capital of traditional religion," says the father of the terrible Trident fleet. "It is running out, and we have no consensus of values to take its place."

Strange

Carter might put it differently but he would agree with one of Admiral Rickover's favourite quotes, from Voltaire: "Not to be occupied and not to exist are one and the same thing for a man."

It is exceedingly strange, and by no means entirely comforting, to have words like this, praising work and the excellence of others, from the man who wishes to encircle the globe with 10 Trident Submarines.

I do not suggest that Rickover is wrong in his strategic understanding that the American Navy—and,

ultimately the defence of America and the rest of us—cannot afford to rely on oil supplies, and needs nuclear-powered submarines cruising silently along the beds of the oceans.

The Trident offer any man who controls them too much power. Yet, ironically, if it is never used, who can say that it was truly excessive for mankind.

□ A MAN on the moon was one thing; ridiculous and, to my way of thinking (however exciting it was at the time) in retrospect a very large step backwards for mankind.

I feel much the same about the Mars launch. It is such a waste of effort, talent, taxes and time. Clever—exceptionally so.

But why such an effort to discover whether there is life on Mars? The scientific consensus is that there will be some kind of life somewhere.

It would please me greatly if there were to be some sort of life on Mars which would crawl out of the dust, or slime, or whatever they have for a Martian surface, and take a look at this Viking space-craft, sitting looking ridiculous on its three legs—whatever form of life has three legs?—and decided that it was a rather nasty bug.

If the Martians then toppled the thing over, so that, like a beetle it would die while twitching its legs, unable to right itself, then a kind of justice would have taken place.

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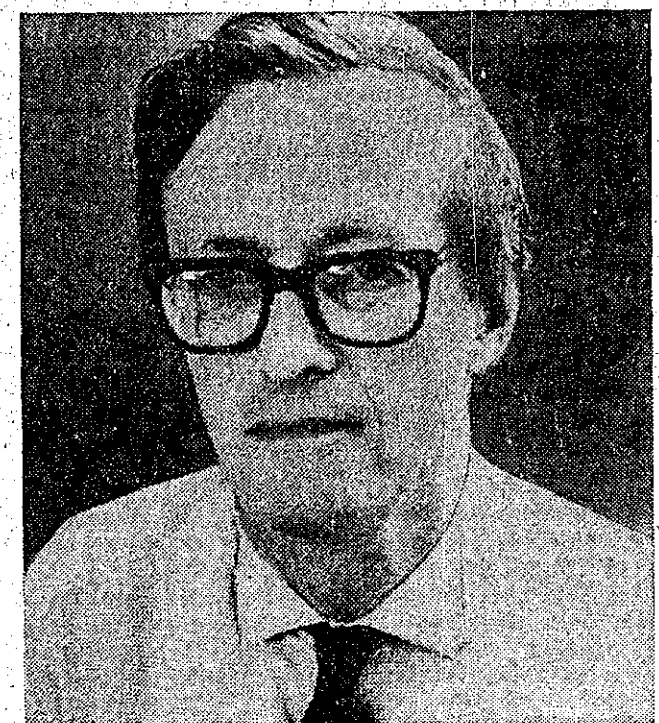
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Oxford's Dr. Sykes: A man who cares about words

By Terence Ryle

eighteenth century meaning [a tour of Europe, meaning education] had not been updated to include a space flight encompassing several planets.

It is among the new colloquialisms and slang, I suspect, that controversy (the dictionary allows either pronunciation of the word) will occur.

"Grunted" may get the approval of linguistic traditionalists since its pedigree dates back to 1938 when that old master of English P. G. Wodehouse introduced it in "The Code of the Woosters" but "po-faced," I fear, may not get their acceptance.

Nor will the tremendous influx of Americanisms. Mazuma, Jake, Doonickety, Gabfest, uptown, Downtown, Lubritorium (a place where motor vehicles are lubricated—what else?) will do nothing to make purists love the U.S. more in this, its bicentennial year.

Slang

"The aim of the Concise is to define words that are in current use," Dr. Sykes points out, not at all on the defensive. "We have increased the contribution from the English-speaking world outside the British Isles and the American contribution is the most significant."

Modern English is well represented. New scientific terms are comprehensively covered; motoring slang—

Dr. Sykes wears the tie of one who has passed the advanced driving test—gets a mention with words like "tacho"; a bird is a young woman as well as a feathered vertebrate with two wings and two feet.

All human life is there although some will undoubtedly think it shouldn't be.

It's not just modern words which will give offence. Mild sexual deviations with sound Latin roots are defined as are the earthy terms the Anglo-Saxons used (even the rhyming slang the Cockneys use for Anglo-Saxon terms) which one couldn't imagine Dr. Sykes approving.

Prowess

"The dictionary does say that these words are only in vulgar use," he points out. "It doesn't set any stamp of approval on them any more than any other words. It merely reflects the fact that nowadays they are more common both in print and spoken English."

We got on to safer ground. What about his prowess at crosswords, winning "the Times/Cutty Sark" national competition four years running before retiring in 1976 to let someone else have a chance?

"Well, I won an awful lot of whisky," he says. "Unfortunately I don't drink it, but there's never too much whisky about giving bottles of whisky away."

• TO MARK the publication of the new Concise Oxford Dictionary, the Express is giving away 20 copies to followers of the Target Word game which goes up to nine letters today. See Page 4.